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INFO RUCNDMI/HUMANITARIAN DEMINING COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001816

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/I/POLMIL, NEA/I  
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TAGS: [KHDP](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI AGREEMENT ENABLES DEMINING TO CONTINUE

REF: BAGHDAD 1798

Classified By: A/PMA W. S. Reid for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Iraqi ministries signed an interagency agreement (MOU) without fanfare July 5 that will enable NGOs and companies to continue humanitarian demining in Iraq, according to Ministry of Environment (MOEnv) Deputy Director Dr. Kamal Latif. The breakthrough ends a six-month bureaucratic dispute that halted significant demining work (reftel). The agreement re-activates the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), headed by Dr. Kamal, who seeks to develop it into a professional, civilian agency with close ties to the Department, the UNDP, and other international funders. However, the MOD retains significant power under the MOU to block organizations or projects that it finds objectionable, Dr. Kamal explained. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Deputy Director Kamal visited the Embassy July 6 to share the promising news with emboff and to discuss demining initiatives in Iraq. Dr. Kamal sent a signed scanned copy of the MOU in Arabic by email July 7. Despite negative media attention to the demining deadlock (reftel), there were no plans for a public signing or media event. Dr. Kamal said he preferred to show demonstrable progress in demining before highlighting the agreement publicly. Quick to focus on operational issues, he requested information about training opportunities for demining professionals and promised emboff that he would work as an intermediary to resolve disputes between the Iraqi military and NGOs.

¶3. (C) Reftel conveyed two concerns: a) the ministries would not sign a MOU, or b) they would sign a MOU, but one with a clause allowing MOD representatives sit on the boards of demining companies. Neither happened, according to Dr. Kamal. The latter scenario -- a "flawed MOU" -- threatened to discourage demining operations. According to Dr. Kamal, MOD consented instead to modify the clause defining the MOD representatives as "observers" rather than "participants." (Note: The MOU will be translated into English by Embassy linguists shortly. End note.) Dr. Kamal also was confident that he could negotiate changes and improvements to the agreement over time.

¶4. (C) Comment: This positive turn of events comes with caveats. It remains to be seen if MOD will approve the vetting of particular organizations, such as the Iraqi Mine Clearance Organization (IMCO), a U.S.-supported NGO, or its projects. The Political-Military Affairs Section plans to maintain close working relationship with Dr. Kamal and DMA to monitor whether or not demining projects are actually permitted, which organizations are allowed to operate, and under what conditions. Dr. Kamal reiterated concerns reported by UNDP contacts that the rift between MOD and IMCO Executive Director Zahim Mutar was irreparable, and that major restructuring of IMCO would be necessary for it to

continue with significant demining work in Iraq. The Section will seek to engage MOD Legal Advisor Dr. Ghaleb, together with Dr. Kamal, to discuss the future of IMCO and develop even stronger relationships among MOD, MOEnv, DMA and the Embassy. The Section will also coordinate with UN representatives to put one of their demining projects forward as a test case of Iraq's new system of managing mine action projects. End comment.  
HILL